

A BLACK CIVILIZATION

283 now modern Queensland, this ratio is reversed and the chief material for public decorations or coverings is of vegetable fiber string.

● 415 [293] *Women's Food Bags.*—The women's food bags (like the men's baskets) are so much a part of their ordinary equipment that the writer has placed them in the category of things worn. The natives think of them as such.

The bags are of two major types. The norm of one is around twenty-one inches in length and twelve inches in width, while the other has a norm of eighteen by eight inches. The mesh of the larger bag is usually about one-quarter inch in diameter; the smaller has a mesh of about an eighth to a sixteenth of an inch. Each has a handle of from two to eight strands of fiber string tied to the rim of the bag. The handle is made long enough (sixteen inches) to fit over the forehead of the woman and allow the bag to lie against her back just below the neck.

286 Two sticks are put in the ground some few inches apart, according to the size of the bag desired, and the basal strand placed around them. The woman squats or sits while weaving. She works from left to right on one side of the sticks, forming the loop-meshes across the basal strand.¹ The finished side is taken from the sticks and put on the opposite side of the stick, so that the weaver now continues working from left to right to finish the other side of the bag. The ends are then sewn together. The basal strand may be removed, but it frequently remains in the bag.

415 These bags are used by the women to transport cycad nuts, yams, larger lily bulbs, or any other vegetable or animal food brought to camp by them. Men do not use this type of container.

[531] Rarely, to decorate the bags, bands of darker and lighter fiber string are alternated at intervals of about three-quarters of an inch.

415 *Spirit Bags.*—Throughout northeastern Arnhem Land the medicine men use a small bag made by the simple loop technique of the woman's food bag.

286 Ordinarily the string used is extremely fine and the mesh about an eighth-inch in diameter. The bag itself is about four to six inches in diameter, and, when stuffed with native cord and tied at the top with vegetable fiber string, is round in shape. It is manufactured exactly as is a woman's food bag. A string handle about sixteen inches long is attached at its neck and worn as a head circlet so that the bag usually reposes over the ear. At times it is worn around the medicine man's neck.

[531] The bag may be decorated with alternating bands of dark and light fiber, or it may have a series of geometrical designs in red, yellow, white, and black painted upon it. Frequently it is also covered with birds' down. 415 293 At other times the whole bag is completely covered with red ochre, with

¹ "The circular basal strand is identical with the stirrup of the European netter, and is either fixed like it to some circular support or else held in position by passing the leg, big toe, etc., through it: it usually remains as it is, part and parcel of the manufactured article." W. E. Roth, *North Queensland Ethnological Bulletin*, Brisbane, 1901, No. 1, page 12.

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no other ornamentation upon it. The red ocher is not only for decoration, but it adds spirit "power" to the receptacle. 415 ● 293

East of the Goyder River the bag is used exclusively by the medicine man, whose spirit helpers reside in it. West of the Goyder River it is also worn by anyone who so desires for good luck in hunting. Here also it is held in the teeth during a fight to add magical powers and bravery to the fighter. [177]

Fighting "Tie."—Sometimes a "tie" is carried in the mouth to gain power during a fight. The tie is made by the same technique as the spirit bag. It is made of coarse vegetable fiber string, is flat, about eighteen inches long and three inches wide, and has a fiber string handle which allows the owner to wear it around his neck when not in use. It has ornamental value, although it is never decorated except with alternating bands of dark and light fiber. 777 293

The netting stitch is not used in the making of bags or the tie in this area as it is in Queensland. [286]

Forehead Bands.—This article of ornamentation is made of small thread-like string with a mesh that is a sixteenth of an inch in diameter. Its length and width correspond to the size of the wearer's forehead. It is worn only by males. Each end of the band has a string attached to it for tying at the back of the head. The bands are used in the Gunabibi, Ulmark, and Djunguan ceremonies. They are covered with a solid layer of white pipe clay or red ocher. Sometimes bands are made of paper bark tied with fiber string and painted with red ocher or white clay. 301 [852 884]

Women's and Children's "Harness."—This curious body ornament used by women and small children looks, when worn, much like a harness used for hitching horses to a carriage. It is composed of one continuous strand of twelve to eighteen strings of two-ply vegetable fiber. The string is formed into two large equal loops which are joined by wrapping with fiber string for a distance of about ten inches. Each loop is then wrapped separately for from two to five inches from both sides of the joint. The wrapped sections are usually painted with alternating white and red or yellow and red bands of paint. The unwrapped string frequently is covered with red ocher. [283]

Women and children wear the harness during ceremonies. The wrapped portion falls down the middle of the back; the arms are slipped through the loops which are made to cross below the breast. [531]

Bugle-grass Necklace.—The bright straw-yellow bugle grass is cut into small beads about one-half inch in length and strung on a thin vegetable fiber string. The string is then looped back and forth to form about eighteen lengths of ten inches each. To each of the two ends of the bunch of loops is attached a single fiber string. The beads are worn against the throat by tying the fiber strings at the back of the wearer's neck. Men, women, and children wear these ornaments. The bright yellow is particularly effective in contrast with the gleaming black skin of the aborigines. [283]

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open type. A tree root is sometimes used for the web of the open-work basket. 285

A.—The closely woven type of basket has three norms in size: the large, the medium, and the small. The large type is eighteen inches in length with a variation of eleven and one-half to twenty inches, and a diameter at the rim of six to eight inches. There is a slight diminution of diameter in the basket from the rim to the bottom until, within three inches of the bottom, the circumference rapidly converges to a point. This basket is usually used by the women, but occasionally men carry one. Ordinarily it is undecorated. The women use it to gather food and carry their possessions, such as fire sticks, string, et cetera. 285 415

The medium-sized variety has a length-norm of eleven inches and a diameter of three inches. It varies in length from nine and one-half to fifteen inches, and the diameter sometimes reaches four and one-quarter inches. It is used almost entirely by men. They carry their personal belongings in it. Such things as stone spear heads wrapped in paper bark, red ocher, white clay, human hair and vegetable fiber string, and ceremonial objects carefully wrapped to protect them from the profane eyes of women are found in these baskets.

The small type of basket is very closely woven so that it can carry honey. It is owned by the men. It is seven inches long and has a diameter of two and one-half inches. There is little variation in this type.

All the above types are stitched about the rim with fiber string to keep the mesh from working apart, and to strengthen the basket and prevent it from becoming too flexible.

Baskets usually are painted red, black, yellow, and white for two-thirds of their circumference. The remaining third is left unpainted or undecorated, for it is the portion that fits against the wearer's body. The string handle is attached at the top of the basket at the points where the painting starts. It is composed of two to six strings sixteen inches long. Men wear their baskets under one arm with the string slung over the same shoulder. Women always wear theirs with the string handle across the forehead, the basket hanging against the back of the head and neck. The women's mode of carrying a basket is so characteristic that it is used by a man dancing a woman's part in a sacred ceremony. [531] [482]

Several types of designs are painted on the surface of the baskets (with-out a preliminary coating of red ocher): 285 415 531

- (1) The surface of the basket is covered with hatched-in squares.
- (2) A series of yellow, white and red spirals run from the rim to the bottom of the basket.
- (3) The length of the basket is divided into three or four sections and painted in light and dark colors.

In addition to painting, an over stitching of pandanus fiber sometimes runs laterally about the basket.

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285 Red parrot feathers are woven or stuck into the men's baskets. Usually
 415 they form a small band around the top of the basket, sometimes a solid
 531 mass over the upper half of it, and again they outline the ordinary square
 pattern that covers the entire surface. Human hair is sometimes stitched on
 for an outline instead of feathers. It is also used as a fringe over the entire
 basket or on a line about two or three inches from the top. Opossum fur
 is also used as a fringe and to outline the diamond pattern.—Any of the
 described baskets may have from two to eight pendants of parrot feathers
 hanging from the rim of the basket to several inches beyond its bottom.

285 B.—The large type of open-work basket has the greatest size of any
 415 found in this area. It is thirty-two inches by eighteen inches in size and
 has a mesh of three-eighths of an inch. It is carried by a woman by means
 [482] of a fiber-string forehead band and is usually used for gathering cycad palm
 nuts. The smaller-sized open-work basket has a mesh of one-quarter inch.
 It normally is seventeen inches deep, but varies from fourteen to eighteen
 inches. It has a diameter variation of from six to eight inches. All open-mesh
 baskets are stitched at the top. None is ever decorated, and all of them are
 used by women to gather food and to carry their personal belongings.

361 *Armlets, Wristlets, and Anklets.*—The native armlets are usually made
 by the plaiting technique. The plait consists of from two to five strands,
 two being the normal number. The armlet is normally from one-half to
 three-quarters of an inch in width, but sometimes reaches a width of two
 inches. The diameter corresponds to the size of the wearer's arm. Wristlets,
 but not armlets, are made on the arm of the wearer by another person and
 worn until they fall off.

Spear grass is the usual material. The grass is split into two or three
 pieces and soaked in water for one or two days before it is ready for use.
 A small stick or bone is used for tucking in the free strands to give the
 ornament a smooth appearance and keep the edges from breaking to pieces.
 [531] Sometimes fiber string is wrapped about the armlets, and many are painted
 with angular designs.

Women wear a series of armlets half up the upper arm, but men only
 put on a few.

Another variety of armlet is made from the end of a piece of cane. About
 a quarter-inch width of the reed is wrapped with fiber string which has
 feathers woven into it, or feathers are bound to the armlet with a cord.
 [637] Frequently from two to four parrot-feather string pendants, tipped with
 white cockatoo feathers, are hung from the armlet; these usually have a
 core of human hair on to which the feathers are wrapped with fiber string.
 The same technique is used for feathered string pendants as for other
 objects decorated with feathered string.

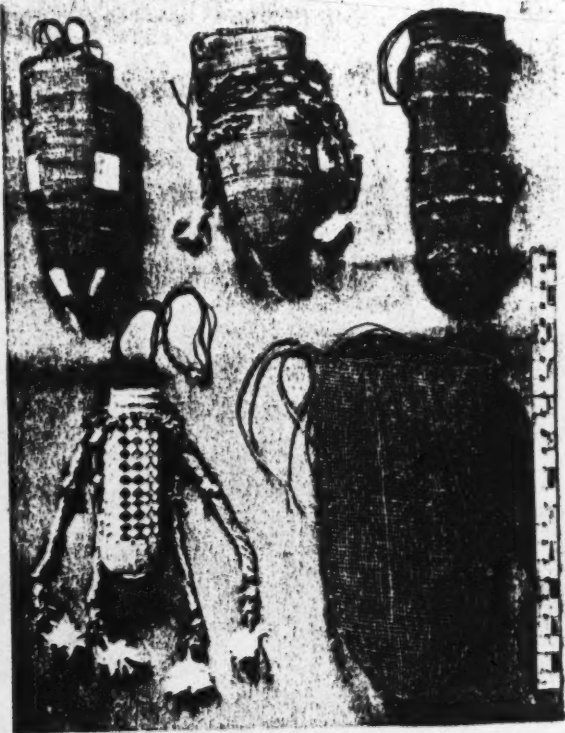
Anklets are sometimes made in the same way as armlets; but whereas
 the latter are worn by men, women, and children most of the time, the
 anklet is seldom worn.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murgin OI 17



IIIb. TOTEMIC EMBLEMS USED IN NARRA CEREMONY.

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IIIa. FOUR MEN'S BASKETS;
WOMAN'S CARRYING-BASKET (lower left).

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[P. 558 C]

ARNHEM LAND: ART, MYTH AND SYMBOLISM

*532 The cross-hatching on the back and front of the figure indicates the tunic worn by the woman and the pattern on the legs, the stripes on her short trousers.
 ● [19] The central disc is a money bag, held in place by the diagonal strings. The artist has indicated *Jubara's* long hair by a series of vertical lines.

The Wuruma Man

76Y Plate 136C illustrates a mortuary post, called *wuruma*, which, according to my informants, is similar to those the visiting Macassan trepangers placed on the graves of their dead.⁶⁹ Until recently men of the *jiritja* moiety placed similar posts on the graves of their dead. Both Warner and the Bernids⁷⁰ describe some of the customs associated with their use.
 *532 [616]

The Woman, Wurati-laku

*532 A mythical woman, *Wurati-laku*, who once lived on the Amakula River, Groote Eylandt,⁷¹ became dissatisfied with her surroundings and started on a journey round the island. She camped at many places, at the Angoroko River, at Amalipa, at north-western Groote Eylandt, at Wangu-garipa, near Umbakumba, at Algirita, Lake Hubert, making her final camp at Natira, near Central Hill. Each of her camps became extensive outcrops of rocky boulders. *Wurati-laku*, afraid lest men other than her husband might see her, always ran away on their approach, covering herself with a sheet of bark. Until recently the women of Groote Eylandt copied the actions of the mythical woman, *Wurati-laku*. Whenever a strange man approached the camp they ran away, holding around their bodies sheets of hinged bark, called *inukumba*.⁷²
 *773

Plate 135C, D illustrates the carved figure of *Wurati-laku*, the designs on the body representing those painted on the hinged sheet of bark, *inukumba*, which she always carried. The dots on her head represent the flower, *latulat*, she placed in her hair.

The Spirit Woman, Wulu-wulu

776 A number of these spirit women, or *Mokoi*, *Wulu-wulu*, live with a male *Mokoi*, *Kultana*, in the Gurila jungle, near Port Bradshaw. The *Wulu-wulu* assist the spirits of the *jiritja* dead on their journey to the *jiritja* 'heaven', *Nalkuma*,⁷³ by giving them as a passport the bean of a *menin* vine.
 *532 [775]

The central line on the carved figure of *Wulu-wulu*, Pl. 135E, is the trunk of the *menin* vine, the diagonals, the branches, and the ovals within the diagonals, the bean, *guring-guring*,⁷⁴ which *Wulu-wulu* gives to the travelling spirits of the dead.

69. See origin of carved figures, p. 416.

70. Warner (1937), p. 434; Bernids (1949), p. 216.

71. See map, Fig. 4.

72. Threlkeld (1925), p. 71, mentions the strict seclusion of the aboriginal women at Groote Eylandt.

73. Bark painting, Pl. 100A.

74. Pl. 100A.

CARVED AND PAINTED FIGURES

The Mosquito Sacred Object

Plate 132D is a sacred object of the mosquito totem of Milingimbi. It belongs to the *dua narra* ceremonies. Collected by F. M. Seidler. 532*
778

3. CARVED AND PAINTED HUMAN HEADS

The Two Brothers, Bauaramin and Wururunga

The two brothers, *Bauaramin*⁷⁸ and *Wururunga*, set out to kill their enemy, *Djunmundia*, who had previously murdered their father.⁷⁹ 628
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Plate 139D, E, A, H illustrates the carved heads of the two brothers, *Bauaramin* and *Wururunga*. [302]

The designs on the face of *Bauaramin*, Pl. 139D, E, and the white line down the nose; which represents the deadly tiger-snake, *dunbania*, are always painted on the face of the aborigines when they are setting out on an avenging expedition. They are known as the 'death-marks'.⁸⁰ The darker cross-hatched panels on the side of the head, Pl. 139D, indicate the base of the thunder-clouds, and the lighter coloured ones, their white tops.

The white dots on the face of *Wururunga*, Pl. 139H, are hail-stones, *milarik*, and the hole at the base of the nose, an attempt to represent a skull, for *Wururunga* has long since been dead.

On the side of the head of *Wururunga*, Pl. 139A, the darker cross-hatched panel represents falling rain, and the lighter coloured ones a hail-storm. The white dots on the side of the head also indicate hail-stones. When these hail-stones fall to the ground in *dua* territory they are sometimes transformed into white stones, *milarik*.⁸¹ The dots on the neck are falling rain, and the white cap, the tops of cumulus clouds.

The Spirit Man, Duwulianna

This *dua* *Mokoi*, *Duwulianna*, lives in a forest at Arnhem Bay. As his only food is the honey of the wild bees, he carries only a honey basket.⁸² 776
262

At the beginning of the dry season the basket is clean, having been well washed by the heavy storms of the wet season. As the dry season advances the basket becomes progressively darker in colour, due to the accumulated honey and dirt, for *Duwulianna* is a careless fellow who never washes his honey basket, knowing that the next wet season will save him the trouble. At the beginning of the dry season the honey in the hives in the trees is a golden-yellow in colour, but it gradually darkens and becomes less pleasant to eat as the season advances. The aborigines blame *Duwulianna* for this change, claiming that if he were more cleanly and washed his basket regularly they would always have clear golden honey.

78. In the myth of the bark painting, Pl. 98A, *Bauaramin* is called *Tjuna-tjuna*.

79. See myth of *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga*, p. 303.

80. See myth, p. 303.

81. See the white stones, *milarik*, at the totem place of the thunder-man at Jalusa, Pl. 91F.

82. A tightly woven basket which will hold honey. [285]
415

 THE ABORIGINES OF EAST ARNHAM LAND

either for good or ill. Thus there are found few natural leaders ¹⁵⁷ among these people, a man's individuality being submerged in the ¹⁸² life of his horde or tribe. This same fact, coupled with the ⁽⁶¹⁴⁾ extreme isolation in which this race has for centuries lived, has also served to stultify progress.

Only by a man of exceptionally forceful character could ¹⁷⁸ reforms be instituted, and life has consequently gone on practically unchanged for countless generations.

Toward those whose friendship has been proved these ⁵⁷⁷ aborigines show a splendid spirit of loyalty. Those who treat them in a fair and friendly fashion will receive fair dealing and devoted friendship in return.

Arts and Crafts

The weapons and utensils used throughout this area ⁴¹¹ correspond to the usual aboriginal type, but include a number of local variations. Little use is made of any weapon other than the spear, though clubs of several types are used to a limited extent, as also are boomerangs.

There are many varieties of wooden spears, barbed and unbarbed, some of which have the head and the haft fashioned out of a single piece of hardwood in a very remarkable way. Flaked ^[438] stone spear-heads are much used, particularly for fighting, and these heads are traded over wide distances.

The use of iron, particularly for spear-heads and cutting ¹⁷⁷ implements, has been known for many decades, this material ⁴¹¹ being obtained in limited quantities from the old traders from ⁴³⁹ Macassar. Only boomerangs of a heavy type are used, and these are by no means common. The light, return boomerang is unknown, as is also the shield.

Many types of "dilly-bag" are made, some of which are of ⁴¹⁵ such fine texture as to retain water. Others are highly decorated ⁽²⁸⁵⁾ with feathers or fur woven in during manufacture. The material used in most cases is the split leaf of the pandanus palm. Other ^[286] bags are made of string knotted very neatly and evenly in an open mesh. Fish nets are also constructed in the same way.

Excellent string is manufactured from bark fibre, grass, fur, ²⁸³ and human hair, and is used for a wide variety of purposes. Much of it designed for ceremonial purposes is decorated with feathers interwoven during spinning. Strong rope is made of bark fibre or grass, and used in the harpooning of turtle, dugong, or porpoise, and for the mooring of canoes.

252 and pounding-stone with water during the process. The dried fruit may also be prepared by soaking in water or it may be mixed with the pulverised flesh and bones of the Red Kangaroo, *kärritjambäl*, into a kind of paste, in which form it is greatly relished.

251 The only other instance, in my experience, of an attempt by Australian aborigines to store vegetable food, was on Western Cape York Peninsula, where the fruit of the Nonda Plum (*Parinari Nonda*) was stored in deep holes sunk in dry sand, where it was kept for some time. The desiccated fruit was then prepared in the same way as *Buchanania* was treated in Arnhem Land, by pulverising the fruit, together with the hard stone or kernel, with a pounding-stone and soaking it in water. The two examples quoted above are of considerable interest and are important economically, for they appear to represent the beginnings of the practice among a nomadic hunting and food-gathering people of conserving and storing food.

412 The implements and domestic utensils used by the women are simple but well made, in each case by a technique which is perfectly fitted to the material available. The most important and characteristic implement used throughout most of the Continent is the yam stick. In Northern Australia, this is made from ironwood (*Erythrophloeum Labouchei*), varying in length from about three feet to five, or a little more, sharpened at one or both ends, the digging points hardened by fire. This serves both as an implement for [411]digging and as a weapon for the fighting in which women sometimes indulge.

● 415 Mesh baskets, as well as net or string bags of several types, each adapted to a particular purpose, are carried, and vary according to the chief food in season at the time. These 482 food baskets are slung across the shoulder and suspended

May, June and July, when the nights are cold, the natives sleep late and the camp is not active until well after daylight. As the people wake, they blow or fan the embers which have been smouldering through the night, and sit around the fire while they prepare for the day's hunting. No regular meal is eaten in the morning, but if any food remains over from the previous night they will warm this on the fire and eat it, before setting out. [264]

About sunrise the camp is in full activity and the people now begin to move off. If each family is hunting as a separate unit the man picks up his spear-thrower and his bundle of spears—chiefly hunting weapons, with a fighting spear or two—and slings over his shoulder a small, closely-woven basket of the type called *būti mindir*. In this he carries a bundle of firesticks, and odds and ends of half-prepared string (*rākki*) in the form known as *daiyarrk* (bast fibre), together with pieces of beeswax and resin—material used for repairing spears—a knife, or scrapers of shell, a spear head or two, and generally his smoking pipe. If there is a young child, the burden of carrying it is shared by both parents. Very young babies are carried by mothers in elongated bark troughs of the same type as those used for carrying water. These are slung over the left shoulder and supported by the arm, leaving the right arm free to use the digging stick or yam stick. Frequently an older child is carried by the father astride his neck or shoulders, and from time to time the parents change over and relieve one another. Still older children follow behind, or run alongside, sharing the hunting activities of their parents and imitating them in the search for food, learning in this way the technique of hunting and gathering food which they will use throughout their lives. [415]

222 Even when they are making for a definite camping
484 ground, aborigines very rarely travel in a straight line. Instead, the journey is made slowly, with deviations to favoured localities which are likely to yield food or game, so that they can hunt as they go. The women and children search for vegetable food as they travel, pausing at intervals to dig yams or other roots, which are put in a "dilly bag" or basket (*bäti*) carried for the purpose. Meanwhile the men are on the lookout for sugar bag (wild honey), opossums, bandicoots (*Isodon*), native cats (*Dasyurus*), as well as snakes and goannas (*Varanus*) or any other game which they can find. On these journeys nothing comes amiss, and in addition to the quest for food, both men and women pause to gather any materials of use in technological

[314] processes, which they may see. The young branches of such
[283] trees as *bulgut*, (*Brachychiton paradoxum*), which form an important source of the fibre used for making string, are cut, the bast fibre stripped and tied neatly or rolled up, to be put into their dilly bags for later use. When a "sugar bag" or wild bees' nest is found the honey and even the bee bread is eaten on the spot, unless there is a large
[415] amount, when it is carried in a bark trough or a closely
[237] woven basket of special type called *timbuku*. The soft black wax is roughly moulded into a ball and carried in this form, to be cleaned and refined later, and used for the mounting of certain spear heads, particularly for *nümbi* and *kaiyit* (flint and iron respectively).

[221] When the vegetable harvest is at its height, about the
222 middle of the south-east season, and the people are living
512 chiefly on a single staple food which can be harvested readily in one place, the women generally go out in a body.

[476] But at such times, although they work close together, there is NO POOLING OF RESOURCES; EACH COLLECTS 30 FOOD INDEPENDENTLY, WORKING FOR HER OWN FAMILY OR FAMILY GROUP.

Late in the afternoon, generally about sundown, the people will be seen returning to camp from the day's foraging, the women carrying baskets of food on their heads, rolls of teatree bark (*Melaleuca*) for sleeping mats or for use in cooking, and great loads of firewood. On arriving in camp they light the cooking fires and perhaps make another journey for firewood to carry them through the night, and to bring water from a nearby well or lagoon. If the food to be prepared is of a type which requires much washing during the preparation they may take it close to water to prepare, bringing it back to camp to cook.

Although men do gather some vegetable food, and women also capture small game, besides shellfish, the division of labour is sharply defined and at once evident. The woman is primarily the provider of vegetable food, collectively, *näta*, the getter of wood and water, the maker of light baskets and the smaller and more finely made nets. The man is the hunter, the provider of animal food, and is responsible for the conduct of large scale drives for fish and game. The making of weapons, heavy implements, canoes, canoe paddles, heavy fish traps and baskets of coarse heavy fibre, called *koiyapoi*¹⁰ (fish-for) or *nätapoi* *larr*, (*nätapoi*, food-for; *larr*, open or coarse in texture), for the carrying of heavy loads of fish and vegetable food, is also the responsibility of men.

The first impression that any stranger must receive is a fully organised group in Eastern Arnhem Land is of industry. He cannot fail to see that everybody, man or woman, works hard, and that the work is well organised and runs smoothly. And he must also be impressed by the fact that with the exception of very young children who engage earnestly in play, much of which is imitative and

¹⁰ -poi, suffix "for".

BASED ON THE ACTIVITIES OF
ADULTS, THERE IS NO IDLENESS.

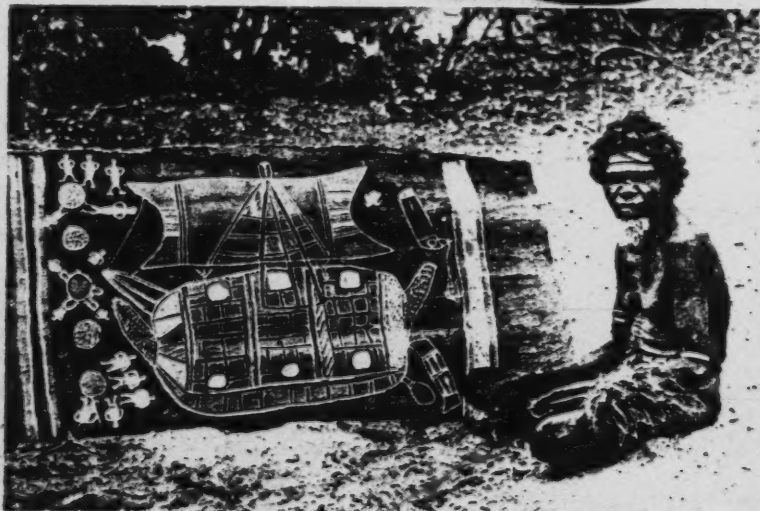
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Plate 5. Replica or "māli" of old square-faced bottle which has been elevated to the level of a ceremonial totem of Mildjini clan, emphasising the social and material value of glass. The geometric design in polychrome represents clouds, highly conventionalised, reflected on the wet surface of the bottle washed up on the shore. The small figures around the centre are trepang or *bêche-de-mer* seen through clear water.



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Plate 6. Wongo of Caledon Bay with a drawing in polychrome of a Macassar prau (*mitjān*). These craft made regular visits to the coast of Arnhem Land and introduced *gerri* of a type called, collectively, "*muadāk*", which gave impetus to the ceremonial exchange cycle in this territory.



[p. 52(B)]

177 hooks, beautifully carved, and light bamboo shafts),
 411 all of which are foreign to the culture of East Arnhem
 Land but are very characteristic of the regions to the west
 and south-west.

In answer to my questions as to the origin of these objects,
 I received at first only the laconic reply "*warnba*", or
 "*warnbanor*",³¹ west or from the west, lit. west-from, and
 when I pressed the enquiry further, my informants added
 "*birr-barlail*", far away from, a remote place. *Birr* is used
 to signify very great or very remote, in time or space, e.g.
pämmän birr—a very long time ago, in the dim past.

The boomerang does not really belong to the Arnhem
 Land culture, although fine specimens are seen there not
 [431] infrequently. These are not manufactured locally and
 almost always show the character of the territory far to
 the south and south-west, from which they came. Their
 [534] value in this territory is no longer as weapons for fighting
 or hunting, but for ceremonial purposes—as "sing sticks"
 or clappers for beating time—in place of the short heavy
 ironwood sticks called *birlma* used to beat time for
männikui ("sings" or chants) which are the accompani-
 [425] ment of each ritual and ceremonial act. Such *gerri* which
 177 bear the halo and glamour of the celebrated exchange cycle,
 411 are imbued with *marr*, with *virtu* or "value" apart
 431 from their practical uses, and accordingly, some of them
 are used as objects of material culture and become cere-
 monial objects and may acquire a symbolic significance.³²
 At first my enquiries elicited only the fact that these items

³¹ -*yor*, -*yora*, suffix expressing "motion from".

● 415 ³² A recent example is seen in the case of the boomerang, to
 435 which reference has been made above, but other examples are not
 778 lacking. One of these is *butulo*, recognisable as the replica (*mälli*
 lit. "shade") of an old square faced bottle carved from a block of

"from *warnba*" (the people of the west) entered the area 177
principally from the south-west, by way of the Raimbaräna 411
tribe, members of which have long been in the habit of 431
travelling down to outlying cattle stations and even to the
overland stock route, and that this food then came east.

Again, the most characteristic type of spear in use 411
throughout Arnhem Land, including the northern shore- 431
line, is *nämbi*, a hunting and fighting spear with a de-
tachable flint head, (see frontispiece), *nämbi lirra*, (*lirra*, lit.
tooth), mounted with hard beeswax and not with resin.
There are only two quarries from which flint spear [135]
heads are derived, but the best, the ones properly called [316]
nämbi, come from the quarry at *nillipidji*, in the hills near
the Walker River in the hinterland of Blue Mud Bay. From
this one quarry, of almost legendary renown, come most of
the flint spear heads of Eastern Arnhem Land. These *nämbi*
lirra are generally passed from hand to hand encased in a
neat sheath of *Melaleuca* bark (*bäruküllu*) called *djalk*—a
name applied only to the sheath of this one type of spear
and giving its name to *kumur djalk*, the quarter (*kumur*)
from which these spear heads enter and of which they are
the most characteristic feature. Great bundles of these
fine spear heads pass from hand to hand throughout Eastern
Arnhem Land, and even farther away to the south, beyond
the Roper River, as well as to the west across the Liverpool.
The second quarry, mentioned above, is located in the
ironwood and which has now become elevated to the level of (778)
clan totem. In bygone days glass bottles which were occasionally 425
washed up on the beaches possessed special social value as material 415
for scrap and cutting implements. Similarly the wooden Malay
anchor, with a single fluke, which was used by early visitors who
came to Arnhem Land from the Celebes, has acquired a symbolic
significance which is quite distinct from its original material value
as the anchor (*luksu*, lit. the foot) of a prau.

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● 415
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Plate 11. A young woman of Central Arnhem Land making one of the fine string net baskets called *kai'u*, used for carrying vegetable foods and *gerri*, as well as in ceremonial exchange.

(Compare Plate 10 overleaf)

[Facing p. 75]

754 unaware of what has happened to him, but they assert that because of their magic he is unable to tell of his experiences when he returns to camp, although he knows that he is doomed, and prepares to die.

After a more or less prolonged treatment to restore the victim and to cover external evidence of his work, particularly in obliterating the tracks to the place where the body lay, the *kalka* wraps leaves—any leaves—around the hook of the spear-thrower and waves it over the prostrate body of his victim, especially over his head. The victim stirs. My informant simulated the groans and grunts of a man awakening from a heavy sleep.

As he recovers consciousness, the victim thinks 'I have slept deeply.' He thinks 'I have slept too much.' Meanwhile the *ragalk* has hidden himself behind a tree.

'I think somebody has killed me,' i.e. worked magic. The *kalka* now springs out from behind the tree and frightens his victim, telling him that he is doomed and that he will die. The victim recognizes the *kalka* and threatens to kill him. He hooks his spear on his spear-thrower but he misses again and again. He has lost heart. He returns to camp, intending to tell his kin what has happened so that they can avenge him. The *kalka*, joined now by his confederates, waylays the victim, and again harries and intimidates him. The man returns to camp but is unable to tell what has happened to him. In two or three days he falls sick. He feels cold and lies all the time close to a fire. He is resigned to his fate and calling his kin around him he says, 'I am going to finish' (I am going to die).

[152]

756 The people, who jump to conclusions, ready to see the *kalka's* work, call on the *marrngitmirri* who holds him tightly, examining his body. He sees sores—the *mali* of the wounds made by the *kandjurma*—and he sees that the heart blood has been drained. If the *marrngitmirri* is not sure, not ready to accept responsibility for his diagnosis, he will call in others of his cult, or he will wait until evening, when his *marrngit* return to him. These often leave the *medicinemen* during the day and return to them at night. The *marrngit* sit on his shoulders or in the *matji-tji*

[776]

• [45] (biting bag), a net basket made from strings and filled tightly with down feathers or with down (*ramman*). The *matji-tji* is slung around the neck and hangs down on the chest by a string. It is carried by men during formal ordeals called *makarratta*, and when fighting in single combat, when they put it in their mouths and clamp their teeth on it. *Matji-tji* are often worn by *marrngitmirri* and provide a place of refuge for their *marrngit*. The *marrngitmirri*, after initiation to the cult, is able to see his *marrngit* and talk to them. The people living in the same camp, although unable to see the *marrngit*, claim that they can hear the *kaindjarr*—the sound of swift motion—caused by their wings, or more accurately, since not all use wings as motive power, the sound of motion. The *marrngitmirri* claim to be able to detect the work of *ragalk*, but not to heal their victims, because their heart blood has been drained, the *birimbir* has departed and their internal organs injured or removed.

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In the years that I lived with the natives in Arnhem Land I frequently saw the *marrngitmirri* at work. He claims

[p. 101 (B)]

CHAPTER FIVE

Jungle Lore and Etiquette

103 Our front door overlooked an alluring crystal-clear stream where it joined the sea. When I asked what the name of the Yirrkala camp meant, I was told: 'Oh, that is the water where the camp is made.' This beach by the sea was a favoured camping-ground and scores of Yulengor drank from the stream. A white man drinks from a bush stream by cupping his hands, or by blowing away the dust on the surface and putting his lips to the water; but Yulengor flip the water into their mouths. Out in the bush, when we were hot and thirsty, we came to a small soak in the hills, whereupon most of the men wandered off for strips of paper-bark or large green leaves from which they drank after deftly twisting them into drinking cups. Scores of these saccules lay around the soak, where they had been used at other times.

271
192 Apt terms describe methods of drinking. 'Wiaktun' is used of the baling of a canoe, which is accomplished by throwing the water out in a shell or the cupped hands; and the same word is applied to tossing water into the mouth. 'Dthurara-luptun' is a word-picture of drinking with the lips in the stream, for 'dthurara' is a doorway, river-entrance, or human mouth, and 'luptun' is the present tense of the verb 'to wash'.

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224 In spite of the constant use of spears and the skill necessary in handling them, accidents do occur. Marjirry, a lad of about sixteen, one day left the station for a day's hunting. He stalked a kangaroo and speared it, but missed all the

YULENGOR

283 made on the same principle. Three men each take a length of fibre. They twist them and pass them one to another to form a single length of rope. As the rope lengthens it is passed over the limb of a tree and held taut by a fourth man.

286 Woven pandanus dilly-bags are pleasing and effective
 415 examples of artistic workmanship. Sacred bags are small,
 [237] but beautifully woven, and are adorned with parrot feathers
 [531] or fur and sometimes totemically painted. Women make most of them and some are so closely woven that they hold water. The majority, however, are large work bags which hang down their backs and are used to carry yams, shells, roots, and small animals. Another bag is made from string, is similar to the well-known onion bag, and will hold thirty or forty pounds of yams.

292 The curious 'nganmara' is peculiar to Arnhem Land. It is a
 285 house, an umbrella, a garment, a shelter from the wind and
 293 rain, a mat on which to sleep, and it is conveniently carried
 [513] under the arm. This conical straw umbrella mat is woven from pandanus palm; it is circular, with an apex two feet high, and gives some slight protection from sun, wind, or rain. When the nganmara is thrown open on the ground a woman and child can be completely hidden under it. I first saw an nganmara when I was on the King River, where the woman who had it was hunting with her friends. When I asked her to show me the mat under her arm, she calmly handed me the nganmara, which was her only clothing. Knowing that strangers were in the camp, some of the women had politely donned leafy twigs, but this lady relied on her nganmara and deftly swung it from under her arm.

276 In west Arnhem Land, tobacco pipes are made from
 [237] large crab claws. More elaborate pipes are also made by boring the pithy centre from a soft jungle shrub and plugging

YULENGOR

* 773 marry only into another specified malk. Animals and birds
 [617] assigned by the Women to the malk were accepted as the insignia or 'djungoin' of those marriage-groups.

The earthly paradise on the round hill kept the Women occupied in naming and distributing fauna, and in inaugurating the famous Gunabibee ceremony in which the
 [796] story of their work and adventures is preserved. In decorating themselves and their totems for the ceremony, they began the present-day practice of drawing their own blood
 [237] and smearing it over their bodies as an adhesive for the birds'-down so often applied now in strikingly effective designs. Blood is taken by a process suggestive of barbarism and scientific knowledge of blood circulation. In west Arnhem Land string is tied above the elbow of the donor, who closes his hand and alternately bends and straightens his arm till the veins show up. One of these is nicked with a shell or spear-head, and by bending and relaxing the arm the blood is pumped into a bark container. To seal the wound the tourniquet is removed, and a boll from the cotton tree is dabbed over the opening. Half a pint of blood may be removed, and the donor and his friends unconcernedly
 [413] paint it over their bodies with fibre or human-hair brushes. Before it congeals they apply birds' feathers.

* 773 In time the younger of the two Sisters realized that, for reasons unspecified, she was about to give birth to a child. Consequently they searched for a good camp site and found one near a lagoon. After the fashion of women, they had fonnicked during the day for food, and had also gathered sheets of paper-bark to cover their hut, so that by the time they came to the lagoon they were loaded down with rolls of bark, and their dilly-bags bulged with yams, goannas, and animals.

The older Woman built the hut and bent sticks into a dome, resembling the ribs of an umbrella, and covered these
 [415] with bark. Meanwhile, her sister went to the lagoon for

TWO WOMEN AND A SERPENT

water, and taking a piece of bark she twisted a vine around the gathered ends of it to make the common water-basket or 'durrnier'. By the lagoon she bent down to dip water and her mali or ghost then quietly slipped into the pool, but she was unconscious of what had happened and returned to the camp. So far the camp was an unusually good one, and there being little to do, the young Sister rested in the sand and watched the older Woman scrape open the fire and drop a handful of landsnails on the coals to cook. As soon as they touched the fire, however, the snails turned over and ran into the lagoon. 773* [415]●

Incredulously the Women stared at each other: 'Did you see that? What happened to the snails to make them run like dogs?'

'They must be a new kind of snail. Perhaps this is their totem country. Try the snake and goanna, they look dead enough.' But the Sisters had to jump to safety, for when the reptiles fell into the ashes, they shuddered, scattered the fire, and wriggled into the water.

In stunned silence the Woman rebuilt the fire. 'You had better cook the yams,' the young Sister advised, 'they have no legs and cannot get away.'

Yet when the yams were dropped into the fire, they also wriggled out by the hairs that grew on their skin, kicked their way down the slope into the lagoon, and swam away.

All the animals, yams, and reptiles escaped in this way, until only a bush-rat and small wallaby remained in a dilly-bag; these had been reserved for special cooking in a stone oven. But the Sisters were so hungry that the young one suggested that they cook them on the coals rather than wait for the oven to heat. No sooner had they touched the dilly-bag, however, than the dead animals came to life, kicked and tore it to shreds and bounded into the lagoon.

'Now there is nothing left to eat. What is the matter with all the food?'